

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson****“Ready to Lead?  
DHS and the Next Major Catastrophe”**

June 11, 2008 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Management, Investigations, and Oversight Subcommittee hearing entitled “Ready to Lead? DHS and the Next Major Catastrophe”:

“For many Americans, their introduction to the Department of Homeland Security was the images they saw on their television screens in the days after Hurricane Katrina. In the weeks and months that followed, FEMA and the Department took a lot of hits, but those of us who actually studied what happened know that the problems ran much deeper than Mike Brown and the Department of Homeland Security.

To be clear, it is absolutely true that the Department failed to lead an effective Federal response. However, it is equally true that much of the rest of the Federal government was not willing to be led.

And though this second truth has been largely overshadowed, it is a lingering problem that must be fixed if we are to do better the next time.

Today we will hear about some promising programs underway within the Department. We will hear about a group – the Incident Management Planning Team, or IMPT, that does more than just pay lip service to the notion of inter-agency cooperation and planning. Instead, every day the IMPT brings together senior representatives from across the Federal government to think about the unthinkable. And more importantly, to plan for it.

It is hard to overstate the importance of these inter-agency efforts. As one senior IMPT official recently told my staff, ‘You cannot surge relationships.’ June 1st marked the beginning of the 2008 Hurricane Season. So this hearing comes at a critical time.

We all know that the Federal government as whole – not just FEMA – was not prepared in 2005. I look forward to hearing today about the progress the Department has made over the past 3 years.”

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